

inequalities, contrasting constitutional interpretations, reports of observers and participants, mitigating factors, accounts of social conditions, subsequent developments, and so on. Interpretation will also include subjective perspectives: reports, accounts, opinions, prejudices, interpretations, allegations, and conjectures. The appropriateness of including subjective perspectives will be judged in many ways, including accuracy, relevance, and completeness. That these subjective perspectives existed is the truth; that they are relevant, important and interesting will be the judgment of interpreters and designers; how to respond to them will be up to each visitor. Anchoring these perspectives will be basic precepts, including the 1954 Supreme Court decision, the Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Perhaps that problematic sentence in the Brown v. Board of Education Plan should have read: "The overall approach to historical information would be simply to tell the truths."

—Sam Vaughn, *Interpretive Planner, Harpers Ferry Center/Denver Service Center, National Park Service*

STATE NEWS

New York State Guide to African-American Historic Resources

Under the National and State Historic Preservation Acts, the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) is charged with the identification, evaluation, and protection of historic and cultural resources. Despite the inclusive nature of this mandate, resources associated with African-American history are significantly under-represented in the statewide historic resources inventory and the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Exclusion of these properties at the identification and evaluation stages makes it far less likely

that they will be considered in preservation planning activities and fosters an exclusionary record of the state's history. As many of these resources are, by their nature, anonymous, rare, fragile, and threatened, devising strategies to address their identification and protection has become a critical issue in contemporary historic preservation.

To this end, the New York SHPO has formed a task force to develop initiatives to encourage African Americans to participate in state and local preservation programs and to motivate local preservationists to focus on this neglected category of resources. The task force has recently completed its first project, the *Guide to the Survey of Historic Resources Associated with African-Americans*. This guide, prepared by a team of SHPO staff and academic consultants with expertise in African-American history, is designed to provide assistance in researching, identifying, and evaluating cultural resources associated with the history of African Americans. Although to some degree aimed at an audience already familiar with the survey process, the guide is also an attempt to reach out to members of the public who have not worked with us before.

In preparing the guide, the task force explored some of the reasons why historic resources related to African-American history have been overlooked in traditional preservation activity:

- The preservation movement itself grew out of efforts to protect monuments to a national history that was written by the majority cultural group. Although our definition of history has expanded considerably in recent years, we are still feeling the effects of outdated hierarchies and limited world views. Some continue to find it difficult to recognize historic resources that are associated with other cultural groups and the everyday lives of their members.

- In the wake of Urban Renewal, the preservation move-

ment gained great momentum through efforts to preserve highly visible architectural landmarks, threatened urban centers, and declining residential neighborhoods. The overwhelmingly visual orientation of this era skewed the focus of the profession toward architectural history, an approach that encouraged preservationists to overlook resources whose significance might be obscured by their ordinary character or revealed only by examining their meaning within the specific themes of African-American history.

- While many scholars have developed expertise about the history of traditionally under-represented groups, efforts within academic communities to identify and protect specific properties associated with these groups have lagged.

- Some have been uncomfortable with preserving resources that represent less than noble aspects of the past, such as resources that recall the oppression of one race by another.

In addition to the subtle effects of this "baggage," many problems of exclusion and omission can be attributed simply to oversight and unfamiliarity. Thus, rather than reinventing the survey process, the new guide attempts to redirect surveyors toward a more inclusive view of local history and supplements rather than replaces the survey guidance developed by the National Park Service. The guide contains general information about the survey program, advice about community participation, a methodology for carrying out historic resources surveys, case studies that illustrate specific issues, a list of major themes and contexts for this subject area, and a bibliography.

The heart of the survey guide is the methodology. This methodology itself is not new. The standard survey methodology published by the National Park Service in *National Register Bulletin 24: Guidelines for Local Surveys* outlines appropriate research

methods for dealing with a wide variety of historic resources. The new guide repeats and expands upon this methodology. Under each step, conscious actions are suggested that can be taken to find evidence of the African-American presence within the survey area. These range from the obvious to the innovative and refer to specific research methods, tools, sources, and examples. For example, the guide stresses the importance of using oral tradition to uncover the history of a group that was virtually undocumented in more traditional published records and explains how biases (both historical and our own) can influence the surveyor to disregard important clues about African-American history that may be found in standard sources.

One important aspect of this redirection is to encourage surveyors to focus more on the research and data gathering phases of the survey project than upon state and National Register evaluations. Because so little has been identified, the New York SHPO is interested in developing a substantial body of contextual information and building a database of properties and property types that have the potential to document New York's African-American history. Therefore, we are encouraging surveyors to record as much information as can be uncovered about the African-American presence in their communities, even if they are not able to complete documentation of specific resources within the scope of the survey project. The more information that can be compiled about this theme now, the easier it will be to identify and evaluate the resources associated with it in the future.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office is encouraging all individuals and groups conducting historic resources surveys to incorporate this aspect of local history into their overall project design. At the same time, New York's SHPO staff will give high priority to projects that focus on

identifying and recording properties associated with African-American history. We hope that these actions will ensure that more research is done, more context is developed, and more properties are added to the state and National Registers. More important, resources associated with African-American history will be better represented in the resource protection planning process.

—Kathleen LaFrank,
Program Analyst in the New York
State Office of Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation.

Adapted from an article originally published in *Preservation New York*. Limited copies of the *Guide to the Survey of Historic Resources Associated with African-Americans* are available from Kathleen LaFrank, Field Services Bureau, Peebles Island, P.O. Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189; 518-237-8643, ext. 261.

PRESERVATION RESOURCES

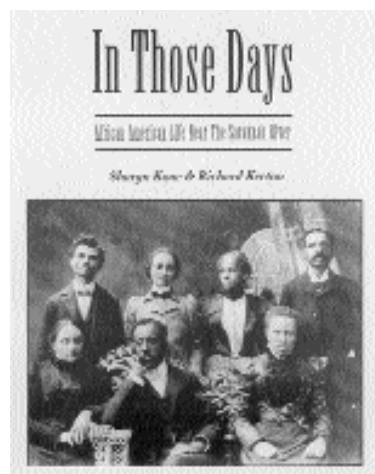
Publications

In 1993, Independence NHP reprinted one of the first pamphlets published in America by African Americans. It is *A Narrative of the Proceedings of the Black People During the Late Awful Calamity in Philadelphia in the Year 1793 and a Refutation of Some Censures Thrown Upon Them in Some Late Publications*. It was written by Richard Allen and Absalom Jones, former slaves, community pioneers, and founders of the Free African Society. It is a compelling and graphic account of the experiences of black citizens during the yellow fever epidemic which ravaged the capital of the new republic. Unselfish service during the epidemic earned Philadelphia's African-American community respect and helped to strengthen African-American insti-

tutions like Jones' African Episcopal Church of St. Thomas and Allen's Mother Bethel A.M.E. Church which still thrive in Philadelphia.

The book is available through Eastern National Park and Monument Association for \$1.75.)

—Joanne Blacoe
215-597-7115



In Those Days: African American Life Near the Savannah River by Sharyn Kane and Richard Keeton, 1994. An account of oral history from elderly African Americans in Elbert County, GA, and Abbeville County, SC. The text explores many facets of African-American life, beginning with slavery and continuing through to modern times. Many historic photos illustrate the text. The oral histories were collected by researchers as part of the Richard B. Russell Dam construction in the early 1980s. The volume was published by the Technical Assistance and partnerships Division, Southeast Archeological Center, National Park Service, with funding supplied by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

—John Jameson

The Harpers Ferry Historical Association, a National Park Cooperating Association supporting Harpers Ferry National Historical Park, carries a large collection of titles and videos on African-American history. Videos include